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Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat**

Addendum

Discussion paper contributed by the children and youth major group

Summary

The children and youth major group of the United Nations Forum on Forests has based this contribution on the principle of intergenerational justice, which demands that the decision makers of today face the responsibility to pass on a sound environment to future generations and allow the children of today to grow up free from poverty caused by the unsustainable use of forests. After a review of the decisions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests (IFF), we came to the conclusion that the international community realized this responsibility, but that the implementation of decisions made has to be fortified.

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To facilitate this implementation, we focused on those decisions that make children stronger in society and support the role of youth as important recipients of knowledge about sustainable forest management. We fear that while forests become increasingly remote to urban youth, the linkages weaken and the recognition of forests as a natural part of the living environment diminishes. Access of young people to forests should be ensured and facilitated in order to avoid the loss of interest in and connection to nature. Overall recognition of the importance of forests to society, as well as the role of local communities in forest management, should be enhanced. The well-being of communities, fostered through ownership in forest management, directly influences that of the children and youth among them.

The present discussion paper demonstrates that children and young people can efficiently raise the awareness of social and environmental problems. Other development sectors are already using this entry point to catalyse changes within societies, and companies are investing most of their promotion budget in the young generation to enhance the image of their products. Official development assistance (ODA) related to sustainable forest management is just a minimal percentage.

The children and youth major group was able to incorporate many of its concerns into the outcomes of the third and fourth sessions of the Forum, and the recommendations make clear proposals on how to strengthen and to improve education to implement sustainable forest management at the local level. The children and youth major group hopes that the IPF/IFF proposals for action, as well as the recommendations developed during the Forum process, will be transformed from a dialogue to real, inclusive stakeholder action. In order to implement these proposals, effective partnerships among the Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, donors and organizations of the children and youth major group must be established.

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I. Introduction

1. The present discussion paper serves as a platform to provide the United Nations Forum on Forests with a synthesis of the views of the children and youth major group pertaining to the achievements of the Forum and to the functions of the future International Arrangement on Forests. This paper also serves as a review of the role and potential of young people in the implementation of sustainable forest management and identifies challenges concerning more effective inclusion of youth in the implementation of sustainable forest management.

2. This contribution is the joint effort of the three designated focal points for the children and youth major group; the Global Youth Network, Initiatives jeunes and the International Forestry Students' Association. These groups have collaborated with numerous other international, regional and local youth organizations, including 4-H Finland, 4-H Norway and the World Organization of the Scout Movement, to ensure the strong voice of youth in the Forum process.

3. The information for this paper was collected through international and regional workshops and networks, as well as consultations on the local level. Some parts of this paper refer to the survey of students from 37 universities, carried out by the International Forestry Students' Association in cooperation with the International Partnership on Forestry Education. Other parts refer to a study conducted at the University of Fribourg on the influence of youth participation in the Forum.

II. Background

4. As background information, the potential of young people has been analysed in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of opportunities for and threats to youth as stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable forest management.

A. Strengths

5. Half the global population is under 25 years old. Young people often form the largest part of the population, especially in developing countries. Young people ensure the present and future availability of human resources in forest activities of all kinds. Progress towards sustainable development will only occur with the help and cooperation of younger generations.

6. Young people are often highly motivated to contribute to the development of society with fresh ideas and innovative approaches. Youth as a group can effectively contribute to the implementation of sustainable development, including sustainable forest management.

7. Managing forests means making long-term investments. What is now being planted or allowed to naturally regenerate will be harvested in 10 to 300 years' time. It is difficult for human beings to plan for these long time periods, especially in regions where financial resources are scarce and everyday income is crucial for survival. Ownership will guarantee that people will have an interest in the future outcomes of their actions. Young people have this interest naturally and instinctively, as they have to organize society for the decades to come. In short, youth bear the responsibility of ensuring that their future livelihoods are well maintained.

8. According to the survey carried out by the International Forestry Students' Association and the International Partnership on Forestry Education among forestry students, the scientific background for sustainable forest management in higher education is sufficiently taught in universities. Students feel prepared and can be an important resource to implement sustainable forest management at this early stage.

B. Weaknesses

9. The organization of youth groups at the international level has shown increasingly beneficial results. However, at the local level, and especially in developing countries, adequate platforms are lacking to allow young people to become organized. The lack of support from professionals and the lack of coordination among different initiatives and organizations often results in duplicate efforts.

10. Awareness of relevant issues is essential for the sustainable use of forests. Adequate information about forests, including their conservation and use, is often lacking in both the formal and informal pre-university education of young people. Gaps in education are leading to a serious distortion in the attitudes of young people. Urban youth are losing their contact with and interest in forests, which are regarded as remote, boring and even scary. Rural youth, although living closer to forests, often lack adequate teaching about their sustainable use. Indigenous knowledge and issues are rarely taught from the primary to higher education level, even in areas where indigenous populations live in the forests.

11. Forestry students feel technically prepared to implement sustainable forest management. However, sustainable forest management goes far beyond technical, scientific knowledge. Deforestation is heavily based on social problems, but the linkages between forests and society are poorly communicated through education, both in primary and higher forestry education.

12. Youth are often not recognized as important stakeholders in forestry. This low level of recognition means that the support given to youth initiatives on the local, regional and international levels is often poor. Youth have difficulties in finding financial support for their activities, and their initiatives are often ignored.

13. The representation of the children and youth major group in the Forum differs from all other major groups because the leading persons will eventually leave the group as they grow older. Due to the relatively rapid turnover of people actively involved in the process, continuity cannot always be guaranteed. Cooperation with youth — from participation to implementation — has to take this into consideration and methods have to be developed to overcome this problem.

C. Opportunities

14. Youth have proved their capacity to implement sustainable forest management with true impact. Investing in this capacity can result in remarkable improvements in the implementation of sustainable forest management.

15. Young people can contribute to the fight against deforestation and unsustainable use of forests if they have the adequate tools to do so.

16. Young people are usually more influential and open to bring about a change in the behaviour of their parents towards sustainable development. An ideological change in attitude towards forests, their use and conservation cannot necessarily be achieved among the older generation, but there is a high possibility for this change among children and youth.

17. Young people, as part of society, make use of forests and their products. Education on sustainable development will enable them to be responsible and environmentally aware consumers. The role of responsible consumer will come naturally to these young people in adulthood.

18. Young people are efficient messengers within their own generation and society in general. They foster the sharing of knowledge and the dissemination of information at all levels, from local to international. Raising awareness about social and environmental problems can be efficiently and effectively carried out through children and young people.

19. Supporting cross-sector approaches, such as linking the education of youth to sustainable development and sustainable forest management, are very promising in raising the profile of forests and are improving the effectiveness of development programmes. Other development sectors are already using this entry point to catalyse change within societies. Companies are investing most of their promotion budget in the young generation in order to enhance the image of their products. ODA related to sustainable forest management is just a minimal percentage.

D. Threats

20. Youth in rural areas face difficulties concerning employment, social recognition and access to education. The trend towards dividing forests into either production units or conservation areas often hinders access to the forest for both small-scale income-generation and educational and recreational purposes, thereby further weakening the living conditions of rural youth. Meanwhile, forests are becoming increasingly remote to urban youth, the linkages weaken and the recognition of forests as a natural part of the living environment diminishes.

21. Young people tend to be the most vulnerable and marginalized group with respect to unemployment, poverty, armed conflict and health problems, and they need more care from Governments than any other social group. The decrease in governmental support for the poor through social security systems directly affects youth and women as the most vulnerable sectors of society.

22. Decision makers tend to prioritize certain stakeholder groups over others. Issues pertaining to youth are often left off the political agenda because, in part, attention is given to groups with wider representation, stronger influence or higher political status.

23. Youth often face the situation in which the priority of concern is given to issues that need urgent action. Activities that have high economic importance, receive political recognition and produce fast results attract most of the attention, while youth-related activities play a more preventive role. Investments in youth activities often require an understanding of the future-orientated nature of younger generations. Investing in today's young people is a requirement for sustainable solutions in the future.

III. Review of progress and consideration of future action of the International Arrangement on Forests

A. Young people in relation to forests — challenges in the International Arrangement on Forests and its successor

24. The threats of deforestation and the degradation of forests, as well as the resulting negative changes in society, are affecting children in their quality of life today and imperil the right of future generations to live in a sound environment that can provide them with essential resources.

25. At the same time, young people offer opportunities for making long-term investments in sustainable forest management. If they are taken seriously as partners for implementation and if responsibilities, assistance and funds are shared, they will be the key pillars for the sustainable use of forest resources in the future.

26. The role of youth in sustainable development can be divided into three fields:

- Children as needy and passive parts of society, highly dependent on the social and economic resources of their parents' livelihoods
- Young people as an active part of society, motivated to contribute to the development of society with fresh ideas and innovative approaches, as disseminators of knowledge on sustainable development and as an important human resource for future implementation
- Young people as advocates of intergenerational justice and sustainability, which implies the right of younger generations to live in a sound environment that can provide them with essential resources

27. As youth has not been actively involved in the IPF/IFF process, their needs and concerns are very general and are only indirectly reflected in the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Nevertheless, many decisions treat children as needy, dependent and passive individuals when it comes to the social and economic aspects of forests. Furthermore, the concept of sustainable forest management captures the principle of intergenerational justice.

28. When the children and youth major group participated for the first time in the third session of the Forum, they provided substantive input to the process and made concrete suggestions for using the potential of youth to implement sustainable forest management.

B. Review of the multi-year programme of work

29. We believe that the Forum addressed the key challenges ahead to implement sustainable forest management by calling on Governments, international organizations, donors and major group organizations to promote its implementation. In reviewing the progress of the International Arrangement on Forests, the children and youth major group would like to focus on several topics related to the multi-year programme of work of the Forum that would need to be emphasized for the efficient implementation of sustainable forest management.

1. Social and cultural aspects of forests (Forum resolutions 3/1, paragraph 3, and 4/2, paragraphs 2 and 7)

30. As already stated in the children and youth major group discussion paper for the fourth session of the Forum, one of the principal concerns of forest-dependent communities today is the loss of control over the management of their forest resources. Timber cut in developing regions or in countries with large intact primary forests is often shipped away to be processed, often illegally, with very little employment generated for local communities. Furthermore, there is an emerging push to link local forest management with poverty alleviation efforts in developing countries as was also recognized by the parties at the fourth session of the Forum.

31. The strong ownership of and commitment to forest-dependent communities to sustainable forest management can help to overcome the social causes for deforestation. Communities living in balance with their environment can provide better living conditions for children.

32. Law enforcement and the importance of combating illegal trade was addressed at the third session of the Forum.

2. Economic aspects of forests (Forum resolution 3/1, paragraphs 1 and 10)

33. The linkages between the sustainable use of forests and youth as a part of society should be recognized and the relationship among poverty reduction, youth and forests should be emphasized. Income-generation from forest products, especially in those rural livelihoods that are dependent on forests, can be essential for the well-being of young people by enabling access to education and generating employment opportunities.

34. As also stated by the parties at the third session of the Forum, forests must have a priority in national development and poverty reduction strategies. Young people can be an excellent entry point to link national and local strategies for the sustainable use of forests and poverty reduction, and they can further support the processes with their implementation capacity.

35. The strong participation of civil society in national forest programme processes is useful in proving the capacity of such programmes as instruments to contribute to poverty alleviation and the development of rural communities. The existing supportive tools should be used more efficiently to facilitate the participation of stakeholders in the process. Stakeholder-driven initiatives aimed at widening participation in the processes should be recognized and supported by countries.

3. Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs (Forum resolution 3/3, paragraphs 10 and 13)

36. Intergenerational justice demands that the decision makers of today take responsibility for passing on a sound environment to future generations. They should take this commitment seriously, since the heritage of intact forest ecosystems is rapidly decreasing and immediate action is needed. Participants in the third session of the Forum agreed that capacity-building of younger generations is an important measure to save this heritage.

37. The maintenance of forest cover can be seen as a contribution to poverty reduction. To achieve this, a great deal of educational work has to be done among stakeholders. For example, in Latin America, the landless movements continuously promote the substitution of forests with agricultural plants. These communities must be supported to find ways to make a living within the sustainable use of natural resources. In most tropical areas, agroforestry systems are highly adapted to the local soil conditions and can offer a long-term, sustainable means of subsistence. Development projects should include these important stakeholders and their needs to effectively combat deforestation.

4. Traditional forest-related knowledge

38. The transfer of traditional forest-related knowledge from elders to youth is an important way to ensure that the intellectual heritage of forest-dependent communities is maintained. However, two disturbing trends have been observed. First, there is a continuing loss of traditional forest-related knowledge due to inadequate recognition and protection; thus there is continuing forest degradation and deforestation. Second, there is an alarming trend of intellectual appropriation by commercial entities without due and equitable compensation to the local knowledge holders. This trend, commonly termed "bio-piracy", threatens to rob the youth of today and future generations of the right to this knowledge.

39. The proposals for action of IPF/IFF provide broad recommendations for countries to advance the use of traditional forest-related knowledge for sustainable forest management, with the participation of indigenous and local people. Decision makers must ensure that co-management and other forms of participatory forest management provide the means for incorporating relevant traditional forest-related knowledge into forest management plans and practices, with the involvement of local communities. Research on and extension of in situ and ex situ traditional forest management approaches, or those that integrate scientific forestry and traditional forest-related knowledge, must be promoted.

5. The potential of young people for the implementation of sustainable forest management (Forum resolution 3/3, seventh preambular paragraph, subparagraph (j))

40. The important role of education was highlighted at the third and fourth sessions of the Forum. The children and youth major group could raise the awareness of the parties about the potential of young people to contribute to the implementation of sustainable forest management.

41. To further implement education on sustainable forest management, the decisions of the fourth session of the Forum contain concrete proposals on education and capacity-building in primary schools, developing countries, higher forestry education and youth's role in scientific research, as will be demonstrated below.

6. The role of primary education

42. The implementation of sustainable management of forest resources is a long-term investment and requires support, especially from younger generations, in order to be sustainable. Primary education is the key to raising awareness among children about the necessity of the sustainable use of forests and to providing basic knowledge of forest ecosystems. The fourth session of the Forum recognized this

need clearly and requested the inclusion of forest conservation in curricula from primary to higher education.

43. Primary-level education on forests has multiple effects on the development of young people as responsible citizens. An understanding of nature helps children learn the overall functions of society and teaches them to behave responsibly in society.

7. Education and capacity-building in developing countries

44. The capacity-building and training issue especially reflects the needs of young people in developing countries who are involved in the sustainable forest management process without being in a forestry school. This is crucial for young people in rural areas, indigenous peoples and forest-dependent peoples in order to implement sustainable forest management, and was addressed accordingly at the third and fourth sessions of the Forum.

8. The importance of higher forestry education in the implementation of sustainable forest management (Forum resolutions 4/1, paragraph 15, 4/3, paragraph 18, and 4/4, paragraph 9)

45. An overall understanding of forests requires adequate education at all levels, from early childhood to university-level forestry curricula, which was recognized in the resolutions of the fourth session of the Forum.

46. The criteria and indicators as methods for the implementation of sustainable forest management that have emerged from international agreements on forests, such as those of IPF, IFF and the Forum, must reach local professionals in order to be carried out. Implementation is still weak because of the lack of financial resources, but mainly because of insufficient knowledge resulting from deficient communication between the international and local levels. The children and youth major group raised awareness of this failure at the higher level of forestry education during the negotiations at the third and fourth sessions of the Forum. Governments finally addressed this concern in three resolutions that call for improved higher education to facilitate future implementation of sustainable forest management.

9. Forest-related scientific knowledge

47. The Forum addressed the need to support the contributions of young people, mainly students, to the execution and evolution of scientific research. As recently stated in the report of the Country Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests Regarding a Future International Arrangement on Forests in Guadalajara, Mexico, political decisions should be based on scientific research. For science to make a future contribution to the process, it is vital that students — especially in developing countries — be prepared to serve as high-quality scientists in the future. Students should have access to relevant information about the international frameworks on forests to better identify the need for future research. Furthermore, forest research should include the social components of forest management as they are required, e.g., by young people. This was also stated at the third and fourth sessions of the Forum.

C. The role of youth in the future International Arrangement on Forests

48. As identified at the fourth session of the Forum, both the children a· 1 youth and women's major groups require special attention to guarantee genuine participation.

49. The children and youth major group is the only one in which not only the constituency but also the leaders are changing continuously owing to their age. It is a challenge to guarantee a constant high quality of genuine youth representation in the process. Adequate methods are required. The children and youth major group identified a regional approach as most helpful. Young people can be informed about the international and also the regional, national and local frameworks on forests at workshops on the regional level, where they also can collate information about their concerns that will be presented in the international process. A strong network between the young people, as provided by the International Forestry Students' Association, Initiatives jeunes and Global Youth Network, can foster the continuity of youth representation within the International Arrangement on Forests.

50. An obstacle experienced by youth and children non-governmental organizatons (NGOs) in gaining access to the United Nations is the stringent, exclusive criteria with which one has to deal in order to obtain status in the Economic and Social Council. The process to obtain the Council accreditation is long and demanding. It is hindering the participation of youth organizations within the Forum process. The Forum secretariat should further support the due recognition of the International Forestry Students' Association in order for it to obtain status in the Council.

51. At the Country Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the Future of the International Arrangement on Forests, the major groups of women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, environmental non-governmental organizations and business and industry made a joint statement, which includes six important recommendations that would guarantee an enhanced participation of the children and youth and other major groups in general in the future International Arrangements on Forests:

- Clearly defined expectations by both Governments and major groups for the participation and involvement of the latter in the International Arrangement on Forests
- Support for major groups by the International Arrangement on Forests, including staff support for coordination and financial support for attendance at meetings and events
- Broader participation of major groups in International Arrangement on Forests components, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests
- Transformation of the type of participation of major groups, which would like to be seen as real stakeholders in discussions and debates as they have in ad hoc expert group meetings; to facilitate the need of this major group to be well informed about all aspects of the process
- Assistance in organizing processes within their groups to obtain the broadest possible representation of views and opinions, from the local to the national and international levels, as well as assurance of continuity of participation

- Better exchange of information between local and international levels; this would also allow for improvement in the selection processes for representation in the International Arrangement on Forests.

IV. Youth activities in implementing sustainable forest management

52. The issues associated with forests are wide ranging and cover a great spectrum of sectors, including trade and globalization, pollution, governance, education, employment and poverty. In this context, the input of youth in implementing the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and eventually sustainable forest management, should be gauged.

53. Youth and children have a great responsibility not only for creating awareness and information-gathering but also for implementing the sustainable use of forests. Youth also bear the responsibility to ensure that their future environment is healthy and productive, in particular by protecting and nurturing the forests that maintain valuable biodiversity and provide fuel wood and food for future generations.

54. Described below are some of the youth activities that are contributing to the implementation of sustainable forest management. We have highlighted some examples from the international to the local levels as "best practices". These examples reflect the potential of youth in implementing sustainable forest management when given adequate support and opportunities.

A. International level

55. At the international level, youth involvement in forest-related decision-making processes, such as the Forum, is remarkable, facilitated through the focal points of the youth and children major group, namely the International Forestry Students' Association, Initiatives jeunes and the Global Youth Network. Youth participation is taking place in the Global Youth Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which is an annual event, the UNEP Global Youth Retreat, which is held to coincide with the UNEP Governing Council session, and the UNEP Youth Advisory Council, which is active in all fields of youth and environment, including forest issues. UNEP convened the Children's Conference on the Environment in Canada in 2002. During the past few years, Association representatives have participated in conferences of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, forums of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Forestry Congress 2003 and numerous other international events.

56. Participation in international decision-making processes has had multiple effects. The young people participating represent their constituency in the discussions, bringing issues that concern local youth to international awareness. The knowledge and experience gained through participation in the above-mentioned processes is transferred back to the constituency by the representatives. The experience of the focal points of the children and youth major group is that the investments made to allow their participation pay back generously. The youth

representatives often have an eye-opening experience when they participate in international forest policy events. Through the participation of 34 youth delegates in international forest-related policy forums (the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the subsequent reporting back in their countries, over 2,000 forestry students and youth activists have been introduced to emerging issues of international forest policy during the past two years. Most of the group members heard little about processes, such as the Forum, before their participation.

57. The International Forestry Students' Association forms a wide network of forestry students throughout the world, on which the Association bases its main activities — meetings of students at the regional and international levels. The experience of the International Forestry Students' Association is that the most efficient way to engage and inspire young people is to bring them together.

58. Scouts have valuable experiences from gatherings of young people and organizing meetings of thousands of young people from all around the world. International meetings provide young people with forums and platforms for the exchange of skills, the transfer of information and the mobilization of youth organizations. The outcomes have been positive and have also promoted the involvement of many young people in environmental and forest-related actions. However, there are many youth organizations that do not have the human or financial resources to organize such events or to send representatives to participate in such meetings.

Best practice 1: Linking the policy processes by major groups

A valuable experience was gained with regard to the contribution of major groups of raising the profile of forests and establishing cross-sector linkages, when the major groups of children and youth and workers and trade unions cooperated to conduct a study of the existence of forest-related issues in poverty reduction strategy papers. In the study, entry points for linking forest issues to national poverty reduction strategies were identified, and later presented at a side event at the fourth session of the Forum. The outcomes of the study, combined with a message about the need to integrate sustainable forest management with poverty alleviation, have been included in the Millennium Development Goal Youth Paper, which will form part of the five-year review of the Millennium Development Goals in September 2005.

B. Regional level

59. Regional cooperation on forestry among youth and children has mainly fitted into the broader scheme of environmental issues. In the build-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, regional conferences on sustainable development were held in cooperation with United Nations agencies, in particular UNEP. These conferences dealt with a wide range of environmental issues, including forests and forest-related issues.

Best practice 2: Regional meetings of the International Forestry Students' Association

The regional meetings of forestry students have served as an excellent platform for the creation of partnerships and the sharing of experiences to promote sustainable forest management. Regional meetings bring together people of similar geographical backgrounds to discuss topics of common concern. The experiences from the International Forestry Students' Association Latin American Regional Meeting held in 2004 showed that building regional networks for youth enabled them to set common goals and targets and to work more efficiently towards achieving them. The Latin American network of forestry students has already made remarkable achievements in a short period of time in raising the awareness of forestry students to policy issues and in getting the voice of youth better heard in the forestry decision-making processes in their countries.

60. Regional youth platforms, such as the European Youth Forum and the African Youth Network/Forum, are actively involved in promoting environmental issues relating to forests through the establishment of sustainable development officers, who are responsible for youth policy and action on environment and development. In addition to these regional youth arrangements, there are regional offices of international youth NGOs that promote regional concerns, for example, the regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Youth Parliament of Oxfam. It is hoped that the United Nations regional commissions will enhance their profile with regard to the involvement of youth in forest issues.

C. National level

61. Some Member States have made provisions for or have included forest issues and forest education in their national secondary school curricula, i.e., Nigeria. The inclusion of forest issues in the national curricula at any level, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, is a positive action that serves to promote the awareness of children and youth with regard to forest issues. The importance of forests has become relevant to young people within the context of an educational environment, and Member States are encouraged to adopt this policy change as a strategy for targeting and engaging their youth population in forest issues.

62. At the national level, youth councils exist in many of the States Members of the United Nations. These national youth structures serve to engage youth in issues pertaining to the environment and development.

Best practice 3: Youth as a stakeholder in the formulation and implementation of National Forest Programmes

Youth participation in the formulation and implementation of the National Forest Programmes is still absent in many countries. However, there are some examples that can be introduced as best practices. Finland has invited young people to the steering committee of the Finnish National Forest Programme. In Brazil, the Committee of the National Forestry Programme includes students. Furthermore, the Government of Brazil has supported local young people in organizing events to collect youth input to the National Forest Programmes process. This approach has proved to be an excellent way to engage youth in this process, to increase their knowledge of the relevant policies and to ensure the efficient, equal and democratic participation of youth in the national forest policy process, as well as in the implementation of the national forest policies.

63. In many countries there are examples of the inclusion of youth in discussions on national forest policy as members of different committees. A number of Governments have agreed to invite one youth delegate to the sessions of the Forum as a member of the national delegation. Many countries have also invited youth to participate in the preparatory work for the Forum such as discussions and workshops among the stakeholders. Some countries have opened the reporting process to youth, giving them a chance to contribute to the preparation of documents. Several good practices exist, but they are not more than rare examples. In most countries, a true dialogue between decision makers and youth does not exist.

D. Local level

64. At the local level, youth action on forests is an effective tool in implementing sustainable forest management. A number of youth organizations are taking grass-roots action at the local level.

Best practice 4: Local stakeholders engaging in delivering forestry to primary education

The "Potential in Forestry" model was developed by 4-H Finland to introduce young people to and enhance their knowledge of nature, forest-related activities and career opportunities. The model is based on stakeholder partnerships at the local level. Different forestry stakeholders, together with primary schools, form groups called "forest teams" that are coordinated by 4-H. Forest teams arrange forest- and nature-oriented theme days, events, excursions, campaigns, visits, etc. Each organization has an applicable role following its own principles and resources. This pluralism guarantees that young people will get multiple views on the variety of nature in Finnish forests. The model has been a great success and it is rapidly spreading throughout Finland.

65. Urbanization is a challenge for both developed and developing countries. Cities are often more appealing to young people, since rural areas have high rates of unemployment and the reputation of being places with few or non-existent activities or opportunities for young people. The generally low profile of forests and the activities arising from them does not improve the image of the rural areas, which are often dependent on forests. However, it has been proved (by a 4-H study) that the participation of young people in the decision-making process at the local level increases their willingness to stay in rural areas or to return after finishing their studies. It has also been shown that such young people actively participate in the improvement and development of their livelihoods.

66. Encouraging enterprise among youth has proved to be another efficient way of developing rural areas. The "Learning by Doing" project model of 4-H encourages youth to make a living from forestry activities. For example, in Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania, there are cooperation projects in which youth are starting and maintaining their own mini-enterprises with small-scale agroforestry, providing services and other relevant activities. Giving youth opportunities for enterprise and encouraging initiative enables them to make future contributions to the development of their communities.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

A. Implement decisions of the Forum

67. **The children and youth major group could contribute many of its concerns to the outcomes of the third and fourth sessions of the Forum. The recommendations of these texts, as well as the outcome of ad hoc expert group meetings and the Country Led Initiative in Guadalajara, Mexico, make clear proposals on how to strengthen and improve education in order to implement sustainable forest management at the local level and how to enhance the participation of young people in the International Arrangement on Forests process. To implement these proposals, effective partnerships among Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, donors and organizations of the children and youth major group have to be established.**

B. Strengthen the role of local communities in forest management

68. **Young people tend to be the most vulnerable group in society. They are the first to suffer from deteriorating economic and social living conditions in communities, caused by increasing socio-economic problems often linked with the misuse of natural resources. Harmonized efforts are needed to link forest and youth issues to society and development. To improve the situation of local communities in developing countries, the future International Arrangement on Forests should:**

(a) Relate the underlying causes of deforestation, as found in macroeconomic policies, economic crises and infrastructure development, to sustainable forest management and its poverty-alleviating capacity;

(b) **Strengthen the role and the ownership of local communities in forest management;**

(c) **Guarantee that the profits of forestry reach the local people living in the forests;**

(d) **Support the implementation of sustainable forest management through education and the provision of financial means among local communities;**

(e) **Foster the democratic capacity of local communities and Governments with projects and processes that link good governance and sustainable forest management;**

(f) **Follow up the matter of decentralization and forestry by including the outcome of the Country Led Initiative on Decentralization, held in Interlaken, Switzerland, in 2004 in the process.**

C. Work for the overall recognition of forests as a natural part of society

69. **The access of young people to forests should be ensured and facilitated in all countries to avoid the loss of interest and connection to nature. Furthermore, the potential role of forests in improving the quality of life by offering opportunities for employment and recreation should be emphasized in order to raise the interest of young people in forests ecosystems.**

D. Create sustainable financial mechanisms supported by innovative educational and participation methods to foster youth activities in implementing sustainable forest management

70. **There is a strong need for developing financial mechanisms that support forest-related youth initiatives in both developed and developing countries, from the local to the international levels, including indigenous youth groups. These financial mechanisms need to ensure the equitable sharing of financial support. The mechanisms should include a monitoring system to prevent the inappropriate or inefficient use of financial resources. At the same time, educational and participation methods have to be developed to guarantee the sustainable use of financial resources.**

E. Strive for improvement in the education on sustainable forest management both within and outside formal education, at all levels

71. **Member States are encouraged to set standards of professional level forestry education by synchronizing the quality of the education. A strategy for filling the gaps in forestry curricula should be formulated in cooperation with other Member States. In addition to formal educational structures, the informal educational work carried out by various stakeholders should be recognized and supported. Countries and stakeholders are encouraged to establish**

partnerships for setting commonly agreed targets, avoiding duplication and ensuring as complete an educational programme as possible.

72. **It is our hope that the United Nations Forum on Forests will result in a successful transition from dialogue to the implementation of a tangible action plan. Youth from around the world are ready to accept the challenge of helping to make this happen. Although this group has demonstrated the ability to implement forest-related research and education projects, it has a much greater capacity to contribute. We look forward to hearing how our input has been given consideration in this process and to being called upon to help make progressive change a reality.**